

## FOOTBALL

### Dawgs look to play spoiler against Bears

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#### PATRICK DOLAN

*ThisWeek Staff Writer*

Out of contention for the Division I playoffs, the Grove City High School football team knows that it could land a severe blow to Upper Arlington's playoff aspirations if it pulls off the upset Friday over the visiting Golden Bears in an OCC-Buckeye Division contest.

The Dawgs also could play the role of spoiler in their finale Oct. 26 at league-rival and defending state champion Hilliard Davidson.

UA, which improved to 6-2 overall and 2-1 in the OCC-Buckeye with a 49-0 win over Westerville North last Friday, is eighth in the Division I Region 3 computer rankings with 13.2 points and Davidson, which is 5-3 and 1-2 heading into its league game against Reynoldsburg on Friday, is 10th (11.6375). The top eight in each region qualify for the playoffs.

"You don't necessarily want to knock a team in your league out of the playoffs," said Dawgs coach Scott McIntire, whose team dropped to 2-6 and 1-2 with a 17-12 loss to Reynoldsburg last Friday. "It's nice to be able to brag about how many teams in your league make the playoffs, but I'm sure we'll look at (the game against UA) as a playoff game. We play another playoff-quality team in Davidson next week. If we beat two playoff-quality teams, it would be a great way to send the seniors out and a great way to head into next year."

UA coach Mike Golden views Grove City as a dangerous opponent despite its record.



BY STEVE FRIEND/THISWEEK  
**UA's Anthony Finissi bowls over Westerville North's Chris McCluney last Friday after catching a pass on a faked punt.**

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#### At a glance

UA at GROVE CITY

When: 7:30 p.m. Friday

Last meeting: 2006, UA 14-7

Grove City (2-6, 1-2 OCC-Buckeye) to date: Lost to Worthington Kilbourne 28-0; lost to Buford (Ga.) 34-7; lost to Lancaster 26-24; defeated Westerville South 42-21; lost to DeSales 38-7; lost to Dublin Coffman 49-20; def. Westerville North 35-14; lost to Reynoldsburg 17-12

Top Dawgs: Cody Beatty, Robbie Grooms, Joel Laborce, Elijah Smurthwaite, Brock Snyder, Shane Usner and Ray Walker

Of note: The Bears lead the all-time series 33-7-1.

"We have to take (the game) very seriously," said Golden, whose team closes the regular season Oct. 26 at home against Reynoldsburg. "They have a lot of tradition, and when you have that you have a lot of pride. I expect them to give us a great game.

"If we win out, I think we can stay at eight (in the region rankings) or maybe move up a little bit. But I think winning out is a must (to make the playoffs)."

UA defeated Grove City 14-7 last season behind a strong rushing attack, as former running back Will Johnston ran for 100 yards on 16 carries and fullback Tommy Farwick carried the ball 21 times for 89 yards.

The Dawgs continue to have trouble stopping the run. That could pose as a problem as UA, which employs a wing-T offense, thrives on its running game.

Farwick leads the team with with 783 rushing yards on 114 carries and has 14 touchdowns. Running back Alex Drake is second with 590 yards on 86 carries and has six touchdowns.

"I'm very impressed with what I've seen with Upper Arlington," McIntire said.

"They're a very physical team and they have an outstanding running game. Both running backs (Farwick and Drake) complement one another.

"We have fared poorly against the run this year, but most have been teams that run the option. We haven't had as many problems against power-running teams. That gives us a better opportunity against Arlington."

Golden said the UA defense -- which includes linebackers Mark Crawford, Nolan Kleinhenz and Colin McClain, linemen Mikel Berry and Thomas Sauter, strong safety Anthony Finissi and cornerback Adam Donahue -- must be wary of quarterback Elijah Smurthwaite, a senior and third-year starter.

Smurthwaite completed 17 of 30 passes for 234 yards and a touchdown against Reynoldsburg and is 90 of 174 for 1,134 yards on the season. Last season against the Bears, he went 15 of 23 for 157 yards with a touchdown and an interception.

"He has lots of poise, he has a really good arm and he's a good leader," Golden said.

Smurthwaite's primary target is wide receiver Robbie Grooms, who had 34 receptions for 538 yards through seven games.

Golden said running back Ray Walker also must be respected.

"(Walker) can break a big run from anywhere on the field and (Grooms) has great hands and speed," Golden said.

